SUSAN LUCILLE

GLS members practicing CPR on a recent climb of the Three T's.

Rocky Trail Ahead

At 15, Gay & Lesbian Sierrans Section remembers its bumpy beginning

By Will McWhinney, Mike Brostoff and Janis Bowbeer

It all started in 1986 with a letter to the *Southern Sierran.* Murray Aronson, who had heard that the Bay chapter had formed a Gay & Lesbian Sierrans Section, wrote a letter asking if there was interest in starting a local section in the Angeles Chapter. The *Southern Sierran* printed it, starting an outpouring of interest. Many gays and lesbians shared the environmental goals of the Sierra Club and enjoyed the sport of hiking, but wanted to enjoy wilderness "out of the closet." Members of the Sierra Singles were already enjoying the social opportunities afforded by section status and their own newsletter. Many gays and lesbians would continue their membership or join the Sierra Club if there were similar opportunities for participation.

Encouraged by Elden Hughes, the Chapter Council chair, the GLS organizers, including Don Thompson, Bob Marshall, Matthew Eichler and Kathy Andeway, held a meeting in West Hollywood's Plummer Park that was attended by 40 men and women. Dick Hingson and Bob Hattoy gave helpful advice. The decision was made to go forward with forming a committee. The route to sectionhood was through the Chapter Council. On September 22, 1986, the GLS was placed on the agenda—and was voted down 12-3. Apparently there was fear of getting involved in gay politics and promoting a gay lifestyle. A revised application was brought back to the next meeting and was again denied.

Undaunted, rated leaders Murray Aronson and Peter Geissler led the first GLS hike at La Jolla Canyon, near Point Mugu, on January 25, 1987. A crowd of 55 people showed up, including Susan Lucille, Steve Green, Janis Bowbeer, Beth Epstein and Inga Borg. With that success behind them, the founders redoubled their efforts to get section status.

The two years the GLS spent in the wilderness was not spent wandering and waiting. In the fine Sierra Club tradition of grassroots activism, they just started doing the job. They got leadership ratings, scheduled hikes, began a newsletter, wrote action letters, repaired trails, even appointed a conservation chair. Steve Green began the Wednesday Night Conditioning Hikes in Griffith Park, which continue uninterrupted to the present.

At the same time they built bridges to other Angeles Chapter entities. Beth Epstein, Murray and Dick individually went to almost all the sections and groups to explain the application and seek support. The climbing sections were particularly supportive—the late Maris Valkass and Dick Akawie, in particular, showed great kindness and courage by speaking up for us there.

At the September 1987 ExComm meeting, the application for section status was considered and denied.

Many GLS members became discouraged but Murray rallied them. Dick Hingson and Murray studied the bylaws, waited for the chapter election to bring in a new ExComm, lobbied members, and received endorsements from other entities, including the ICO. At the October 1988 ExComm meering the application was reconsidered. This time the ExComm members voted in favor of the application. The Gay & Lesbian Sierrans Section was finally official.

Since its founding the GLS has led more than a thousand outings and countless other events. Our current membership of 350 is geographically broad, stretching beyond the Chapter's boundaries. Our outings, which are open to all, are as diverse as our membership. From the highest (Mt. Whitney) to the lowest (Death Valley), we've been there. On January 5, we will celebrate our 15th year of outings by repeating that first hike in La Jolla Canyon (see below). Join us!

GLS marks anniversary with La Jolla Canyon hike

Fifteen years ago the first Gay and Lesbian Sierrans Section group met to hike up La Jolla Canyon in Point Mugu State Park. On January 5, 2002, we will celebrate our anniversary and the Club's Outings Centennial by hiking the same trail again. The route (7.5 miles, 1,200-foot gain) passes a waterfall on its way up to a handsome canyon. Potluck lunch at the trailhead after the hike. Meet ar Malibu rideshare at 8am or Ray Miller Trailhead ar 9am. Bring water, appropriate clothes, food, photos and memories to share. In case of rain, we'll go to a restaurant. Rated O. Leader: Susan Lucille (626-578-1909). Co-leader: Eric Sas (323-221-9909; sas_ea@yahoo.com).